



For Immediate Release

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Heinrich, Risch Reintroduce Bipartisan Legislation to Remove Hurdles for Good Samaritans to Clean Up Abandoned Hardrock Mines

*****EMBARGOED*****

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho) reintroduced the bipartisan Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act, legislation to make it easier for “Good Samaritans” such as state agencies, local governments, nonprofits, and other groups, to clean up and improve water quality in and around abandoned hardrock mines.

“We have Good Samaritans ready to clean up abandoned mines that are threatening our communities through the land, water, fish, and wildlife they rely on,” **said Heinrich.** “I’m proud to reintroduce this bipartisan legislation with Senator Risch to create a path for Good Samaritan groups to clean up these sites in New Mexico and across the country.

“For far too long, we have prevented commonsense environmental improvements from taking place at long-abandoned hardrock mines because we place significant liability

risk on the good faith actors who want to clean them up,” **said Risch**. “I’m proud to introduce legislation with Senator Heinrich to support true Good Samaritans who want to address water quality issues and allow this important work to go forward.”

The Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act is cosponsored by U.S. Senators John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.), Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.), and John Thune (R-S.D.).

The U.S. has over 140,000 abandoned hardrock mine features, of which 22,500 pose environmental hazards according to the GAO. Organizations that have no legal or financial responsibility to an abandoned mine – true Good Samaritans – want to volunteer to remediate some of these sites. Unfortunately, liability rules would leave these Good Samaritans legally responsible for all the pre-existing pollution from a mine, even though they had no involvement with the mine prior to cleaning it up.

The Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act creates a pilot permitting program to enable not-for-profit cleanup efforts to move forward, while ensuring Good Samaritans have the skills and resources to comply with federal oversight. This pilot program is designed for lower risk projects, which will improve water and soil quality or otherwise protect human health.

Senator Heinrich championed a [provision](#) in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to establish the first-ever abandoned hardrock mine reclamation program in the Department of the Interior. By passing Good Samaritan legislation, Congress can remove hurdles that public-private partnerships face and use this program to jumpstart abandoned mine cleanups.

Full text of the bill can be found [HERE](#).

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